

Online Networking

Career Lab
Lucina Hall Room 235

People today spend more time using social networking and blogging sites than using e-mail. With more than 113 million blogs, billions of posts to discussion groups and message boards, and millions of people on social networking sites, it makes sense to use online networking to facilitate your job search. However, online networking is growing so quickly that you could easily get lost in cyberspace. You need to know where and how to effectively spend your online time to make your contacts count and open doors to job opportunities.

What Is Online Networking?

Online networking is using the web to connect you with people in order to help reach your career or business goals. Whether you join a social networking site, write a comment on a blog, make a phone call, or have a face-to-face meeting, it is all about making connections and is essentially the same process no matter what the format is. Networking is about building relationships to exchange information and ideas, to make contacts for job leads, as well as to provide mutual support.

Advantages of Online Networking

Online networking provides many advantages over traditional networking strategies. Some advantages include

- Online networking is available 24/7.
- You can screen profiles before making contacts.
- It is less threatening and intimidating since it is not face-to-face contact.
- It demonstrates that you have technical skills.
- It can build your professional credibility.
- It levels the playing field by hiding disabilities.
- It can facilitate face-to-face networking.

Google Yourself

Not only do job seekers use online networking to make connections, so do employers. Putting personal information on the web can affect your job search. Employers search the web to find information about applicants. Depending on what they find, it may hinder or help your chances of landing the job. Google yourself to see what you find. If you find unprofessional information about yourself ranking high in Google searches, it is time to clean up your online profile.

Clean Up Your Online Image

No matter how hard you try to remove all unprofessional information about yourself on the web, some of it will remain in cyberspace. But don't despair about that unflattering photo of you taken at a party. There are ways to lessen the damage. You can bury unprofessional information about you on the web by joining professional networking sites such as LinkedIn, by writing professional blogs, or by participating in professional discussion groups. You can get rid of it entirely by asking owners of web sites to remove information about you from their sites, or you can wait it out and let time take its course--only recommended for those who write or speak often on the web. Joining professional networking sites and completing a professional profile ensures that professional information about you will be ranked highly in the Google searches while the unprofessional information may be buried.

What Types of Information Can Damage Your Online Presence?

- Personal information that shouldn't be shared in the workplace
- Controversial opinions and memberships in controversial associations
- Evidence of unprofessional conduct in photos taken of you
- Public records of lawsuits or felonies
- Contradictory information about credentials listed on your résumé
- Evidence that looks like a conflict of interest or a distraction from your primary work, such as an additional part-time job

Social Networking Sites

There are hundreds of social networking sites to choose from. The sites listed below are good places to start for professional networking.

- LinkedIn — one of the fastest growing professional networking sites
- XING — good for networking in Europe and Asia
- Ecademy — strong entrepreneurial focus
- Ryze — hosts special networks for organizations to help members interact
- Viadeo — an international site with four contact levels instead of LinkedIn's three
- Facebook — a more social and less business-orientated networking site, but it does have 67 million active users

Using LinkedIn (<http://www.linkedin.com>)

Founded in 2003, LinkedIn now has more than 100 million members from more than 150 industries and from every Fortune 500 company. More than two million companies have LinkedIn company pages. LinkedIn is a social network specifically for business professionals. It is free and easy to use. Get started making contacts to help in your job search by

- Creating and completing your profile.
- Customizing your membership using the Accounts and Settings tab.
- Inviting people to join your network.
- Accepting invitations from others.
- Seeking and offering endorsements.

For more information on getting started, visit the LinkedIn Learning Center. Click the More tab at the top of your LinkedIn home page, then click Learning Center. Be sure to review the guides for new users and for job seekers.

Searching for Contacts in LinkedIn

You can search for contacts in LinkedIn by name, keyword, company, title, location, or industry. You can also sort your search results. Your level of connection to each contact is indicated in the results. Click the Get Introduced or Contact Directly button to connect. You can contact first-level contacts directly. Connecting with second- and third-level contacts requires that you request an introduction to that person through your immediate contact. Depending on your membership level, contacting a second or third level directly by pressing the Contact Directly button may involve a fee.

LinkedIn pulls jobs from other sites including Monster, CareerBuilder, Yahoo!, and HotJobs. You can search by keyword, title, function, industry, company, location, level, and date of job opening. LinkedIn also offers Jobs Insider, a free software tool that you can download to your computer. Jobs Insider will alert you when you have a contact in an organization of interest to you.

Posting Questions in LinkedIn

LinkedIn allows you to post questions to your immediate network or to the entire LinkedIn database. This is an opportunity for you to demonstrate professionalism and build credibility by asking a question that demonstrates knowledge. Do not use this feature to advertise a service or promote yourself. Doing so would be

unprofessional and is against LinkedIn's code of conduct.

Proper Netiquette: Do's and Don'ts of Social Networking Sites

Do's

- Do create a complete profile on a professional networking site.
- Do grow your network by accepting invitations.
- Do facilitate introductions for others who request it.
- Do be as considerate as you would in face-to-face interactions; show appreciation and keep your word.
- Do realize that you are communicating with a global network and a diverse set of people.
- Do spend time lurking to become familiar with sites before participating in discussions.
- Do use proper grammar.
- Do pursue traditional face-to-face networking as well.

Don'ts

- Don't refuse to introduce those who ask.
- Don't use texting shortcuts in your writing style.
- Don't neglect face-to-face networking.
- Don't spam network contacts.
- Don't be selfish and overwhelm contacts with introduction requests.
- Don't give out contact information for your network contacts without permission.

Other Ways to Connect Online

- Blogs: Web logs or "blogs" provide a place for the blogger to interact with others, start conversations, and have a presence on the web.
- Identity management sites: Posting your profile on identity management sites such as Naymz and Ziggs improves the relevance of your online presence during searches.
- Web folios: A web folio is a web site you create to serve as an online professional portfolio and is good if you are an active job seeker.
- Discussion groups: Discussion groups allow people of similar interests to share thoughts and ideas in an online discussion format. Yahoo! and Google are the more popular web sites for hosting discussion groups.

Resources

The following resources are available in the Career Lab in Lucina 235. The lab is open Monday - Friday from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. during the school year and from 7:30 a.m. to 4 p.m. during the summer.

Creating Women's Networks
Cyberspace Job Search Kit
The Everything Online Job Search Book
A Foot in the Door: Networking Your Way to the Hidden Job Market
Guide to Internet Job Searching
How to Succeed in Business Using LinkedIn
How to Work a Room: The Ultimate Guide to Savvy Socializing in Person and Online
It's Who You Know!
Job Hunting on the Internet
Job Searching Online for Dummies
Make Your Contacts Count
Masters of Networking
Networking for Everyone
Networking for Success
The Networking Survival Guide
Power Networking: Using the Contacts You Don't Even Know You Have to Succeed in the Job You Want
Seven Days to Online Networking
Vault Guide to Schmoozing
Your 24/7 Online Job Search Guide

Websites

Career Center: <http://www.bsu.edu/careers>
Career Center Publications: <http://www.bsu.edu/careers/publications>
Great Links to Explore: <http://www.bsu.edu/careers/links>
LinkedIn.com Grad Guide: <http://grads.linkedin.com/>
How to Build a Professional Student LinkedIn Profile: <http://careerservices.linkedin.com/build-a-professional-profile.pdf>
How to Network Professionally Online: <http://careerservices.linkedin.com/networking-professionally.pdf>
Networking 101 (NewGradLife.com): http://newgradlife.blogspot.com/2009/11/job-networking-101-for-new-grads_18.html
PatCriscito.com Networking Internet Web Sites: http://www.patcriscito.com/Bookstore/Networking_Internet.htm
Quintessential Careers: The Art of Career and Job-Search Networking: <http://www.quintcareers.com/networking.html>
Quintessential Careers: Career Networking Do's and Don'ts: <http://www.quintcareers.com/networking-dos-donts.html>
Riley Guide: Network, Interview, & Negotiate: <http://www.rileyguide.com/netintv.html>

Online Networking Sites

Biznik: <http://biznik.com>
Ecademy: <http://www.ecademy.com>
Entrepreneur Connect: <http://entrepreneur.com>
LinkedIn: <http://www.linkedin.com>
Naymz: <http://www.naymz.com>
Ryze: <http://www.ryze.com>
Plaxo: <http://www.plaxo.com>
Viadeo: <http://www.viadeo.com>
Xing: <http://www.xing.com>
Young Entrepreneur: <http://www.youngentrepreneur.com>
Ziggs: <http://www.ziggs.com>

If you need adaptations or accommodations for any of our educational programs or publications because of a disability, please contact
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